

MR. OLIF JOHNSON, PORT ANGELES, WASH.,

AUGUST 3, 1895.

(Interviewed by Richard Rathbun).

Is a Norwegian. Has been in this country 20 years and in the Straits of Fuca 12 years.

Q. Now, the different kinds of salmon you have here in the Straits of Fuca are the tye, the sockeye, the dog salmon, humpback, coho and steelhead?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. When does the sockeye salmon run?

A. The sockeye generally run July and the latter end of June.

Q. How late does it run, later than July?

A. Yes, sir - well, we get them now. He starts in in July and the latter end of June some years and some years a little later and some years a little earlier.

Q. How long does he run in the Straits?

A. He stays here a couple of months.

Q. Where do you catch them?

A. Sometimes in the mouth of the rivers.

Q. What rivers?

A. Elwha River.

Q. Chambers River too?

A. No, we dont get them there much.

Q. Does the sockeye run up the Elwha River?

A. No, sir.

Q. Does it run up any of these rivers?

A. No, it dont go in any rivers here on the southern side of the Straits.

Q. Do you find many of them in the salt water along the southern side of the Straits?

A. Oh, yes; that is where we get them; we dont get them in the fresh water at all.

Q. They dont get the sockeye around Port Townsend?

A. Yes, sir; they get them there too.

Q. They say they dont.

A. They get a few, but not many.

Q. How do they come in and where do they go to?

A. Well, we get them here, and I think they go right across here somewheres. I dont know exactly where they go to, but I dont believe they go up the Sound much. I think they go across here somewheres.

Q. What I have been told is they come in around Cape Flattery and come down towards Clallam Bay and then go across?

A. Well, there might be such a thing, but we get them here all right.

Q. That is important to know. Of course your sockeye here is the same as the sockeye in the Fraser River?

A. Yes, exactly.

Q. How abundant are they here?

A. Oh, well; sometimes we can get a thousand of them, but cannot get so very many, but sometimes I have seen about a hundred taken in one day.

Q. Mr. Hume at the cannery says he cannot get them along here. He means I suppose in big enough quantities.

A. No; he cannot get them that way. All the sockeyes I have seen caught here are taken by the trolling lines; that is the way we get them here. I have never seen any caught by seines.

Q. Do you see them caught by gill nets any?

A. Yes, sometimes, but not many.

Q. Where would they set those gill nets?

A. Oh, out here in the bay, outside the light house. But they are not very plentiful here - sockeyes are not as any of the others.

Q. Do you know anything about the sockeyes on the Vancouver side?

A. No, I dont know anything about them. You see, here 2 years ago there was plenty of them here; that is sockeyes, but there was a large share of them dead in the water.

Q. What time of year was that?

A. About this time of year or a little earlier.

Q. What killed them?

A. I dont know. I believe either there had been some explosion in the water or a whale had run them in the surf and got their gills full of sand.

Q. Did you find them more than one day dead?

A. They were drifting for several weeks. You could load a big ship with them, dead and floating on the water a couple of years ago, of sockeyes.

Q. Did there used to be another cannery here?

A. No; not here.

Q. Where was the nearest cannery?

A. There has been one at Clallam Bay.

Q. What kind of fish did they put up, do you know?

A. No, I dont know exactly, but I believe this Hume, he ought to know. I believe that some of his firm was interested in the cannery. Was either a cousin or brother of this fellow had it.

Q. When did they stop it?

A. Oh, 6 or 7 years ago.

Q. You have been in this country 12 years?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. At this place?

A. No; I lived below 14 miles 5 or 6 years.

Q. The sockeye salmon is the only one they care for in the Fraser River and they are getting very large quantities.

A. They are getting them there now.

Q. They get them among the San Juan Islands?

A. Yes; a few, but not so much.

Q. When do you have the tyee here?

A. Oh, the tyee starts in to run -- the first we see of them is in the latter end of May.

Q. Do you get them as early as January and February here?

A. No.

Q. When are they most abundant?

A. In June.

Q. Get some all summer?

A. Well, once in a while. Well, we get them up to about August, but it is hard to get any after that.

Q. Do you get a fall run?

A. No; not of tyee. When they come down here we call them hookbills.

Q. Of course the hookbill is always the male fish, and all salmon become more or less hookbilled.

A. After he has spawned, yes, of course.

Q. When do you get them?

A. Oh, in October and November, the first part of November.

Q. Are they the same as the tyee?

A. No, they are smaller.

Q. Are they dog salmon?

A. No. These hookbills; well it seems to me they are more like a sockeye.

Q. Dont they have any spots on them?

A. No; they are red almost. They turn red outside. You see the scales wear off and then they turn kind of red.

Q. When do you have the humpback salmon?

A. Humpback salmon starts in now -- sometimes before -- in July -- July and August and fore part of September is the season for them here.

Q. Are they very abundant?

A. Sometimes you can get millions of them here -- just haul them in by millions.

Q. How much will they weigh?

A. Oh, about 3 or 4 lbs.

Q. You get some bigger ones?

A. Oh, yes; but not over 4 lbs.

Q. How much do the sockeye weigh that you get here?

A. Some of them will weigh 8 or 10 lbs.

Q. Then they are mostly smaller than that, aren't they?

A. Yes; they average about 6 or 8 lbs.
From 6 up to 10 lbs.

Q. When do the dog salmon come in?

A. Oh, the dog salmon is in the fall, in
October.

Q. How long will they run?

A. The dog salmon? Well, you might find
a scattering one now here and there, up the
rivers you know. The dog salmon you can get
until about the first of December.

Q. Are they abundant here in the salt
water?

A. Yes, plenty of them -- creeks here used
to be so much in the creeks that we actually
would not drink the water in the creeks; they
had died and stunk so.

Q. How long are they in the salt water?

A. Oh, they are around -- you see them in
the creeks now.

Q. When do you begin to get them in the
salt water?

A. Well, we get dog salmon right along.
We might get dog salmon in the winter too.

Q. You get them in July?

A. Yes, we do get them, but they are not

the regular dog salmon then. You see, dog salmon he is white in the flesh all the time, but he looks a little more respectable as long as he stays in the salt water, and you could hardly tell him from any other salmon unless you are used to it, but when he gets in the fresh water, that is why he feels so bad.

Q. What is the time you get him in the salt water?

A. Well, he disappears about the first of December and he does not show up again during the summer.

Q. How early in the summer?

A. You might get one about May or June when the big tyee run starts in; you can get one once in a while among them.

Q. When are they the most abundant?

A. Oh, about now and later on, about the month of October you may find those then out on the beach all around.

Q. When do you get the coho?

A. Well; that is the silver salmon you mean?

Q. Yes.

A. He ought to be here now, but he is not.

We are expecting them right now, as this is his time.

Q. How long will he stay here?

A. Oh, he will stay around until about October. We can get silver salmon here until in October. The latter part of October we can get them.

Q. Are they common here in the salt water?

A. Yes, sir. Oh, silver salmon, he often goes up the creeks and rivers.

Q. Now, the steelhead; when do you get it?

A. In the middle of the winter in salt water. They go up the fresh waters too. We get them in the rivers here in the winter -- January, February, March and April.

Q. Do you find them in the salt water in January, February and March?

A. No; in the rivers.

Q. How late do you find them in the salt water?

A. Well, I dont know. I dont think there has anybody fished for them in the salt water; they only get them in the rivers.

Q. What time do they go up the rivers; what month?

A. Oh, they start to run up in February. Last winter there was quite a run of them in January and February up at Dungeness, and they run all winter.

Q. Well, now, what rivers do the salmon run up along here; up the Elwha?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. And up the Dungeness?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. And what other rivers?

A. Oh, up Moss Creek. Of course there are no other rivers on this side that amount to anything except those three.

Q. The Elwha and the Dungeness are the biggest rivers?

A. Yes, the two best rivers we have.

Q. Does the tyee run up those rivers?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. And the dog salmon?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. And the humpback, and the silver salmon and the steelhead?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. But not the sockeye?

A. No, sir; we never catch the sockeye there.

Q. Why dont you?

A. I dont know the reason why. Never get them in the fresh water here; but I will tell you I think I know why; the time the sockeye is here they have no spawn in them and have no occasion to go up the rivers. If he had spawn in he would go, but he has not; he comes here very early -- he has no spawn and he wiggles around in the Straits and then he goes over here and spawns; that is why.

Q. When does the tyee go up the rivers, in the spring?

A. Yes, we start to get them in May.

Q. Do the tyee die in the rivers?

A. No.

Q. Do any of them die?

A. Only the dog salmon.

Q. Not the humpback or steelhead?

A. No; unless they get too crowded, and then they will die of course, but he would not die if there was plenty of water.

Q. But the dog salmon always dies?

A. Yes; the majority of them die up where

they are. He gets so he is not able to get down. He loses his tail, and all sore, and will be spotted just like a skunk.

Q. Which do you consider the best salmon you have here?

A. The best are the sockeyes and the tyes are best of the whole business.

Q. You dont care for any salmon that have been in the fresh water long?

A. No. The fact is, you get scarcely any sockeyes here. We get some of course, but it does not amount to anything much.

Smith:- We were over there to get some the other day at Point Roberts and were just too late for them.

Q. How do they fish for the salmon in the rivers here?

A. Oh, they fish them by gill nets and by hooks and spears.

Q. Who uses spears, the Indians?

A. No; the white men spear them. They have 4 or 5 prongs. And the Indians here simply use a hook just like a gaff hook.

Q. Does anybody fish here much?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. Do they get many salmon?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. What do they do with them?

A. Ship them here and to Seattle.

Q. Do they take large quantities of them?

A. Well, you know, sometimes they used to get 15 or 25 in a night with a gill net.

Q. How many men would be fishing in these rivers?

A. Oh, 2 or 3 to a net.

Q. But, how many altogether?

A. Oh, there may be half a dozen or so in the river -- half a dozen men -- it is a small fishery. Well, you might get as big as 25 or 30 salmon a day.

Q. On the Fraser River they have 2,000 nets.

A. Yes; of course these rivers here are not navigable rivers like that is.

Q. How far up the Klwaha do they fish for salmon with nets?

A. Oh, they dont go very far up -- 2 or 3 miles is all.

Q. Dungeness the same?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Do they use the nets in the salt water at all?

A. No; not that kind of nets.

Q. What do they use outside?

A. They use different kinds of nets outside.

Q. But they are all gill nets?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Do they drift them or set them?

A. Some drift and some set.

Q. And the spearing will be done farther up?

A. The spearing has got to be done in the rivers where they are shallow.

Q. Do you think the cannery will get enough fish by and by?

A. I think they will get all he wants before fall. If it should not happen to be any salmon at all, of course -- some years there are not hardly any.

Q. This is one of the bad years is it not?

A. No, this is supposed to be one of the good years.

Q. For what kind?

A. Well, for silver salmon.

Q. Do you have one good year every 4 years

A. Every 3 years.

Q. For the silver?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. How about the humpbacks?

A. Oh, they are more or less every year, and the dog salmon the same.

Q. With the sockeye they say they have 2 good years and 2 bad years, but you dont have the same with the silver salmon?

A. No; it is generally 3 years, one good year and 2 bad ones.

Q. You say they do a little fishing with gill nets here in this bay; what for? Do they fish all through the season?

A. Yes, pretty near.

Q. One or 2 nets, something like that?

A. Yes; might be 2, 3 or 4 standing in the bay.

Q. They would be set nets?

A. No; they drift with them; they drift all night.

Q. They dont drift in the day time?

A. No.

Q. Why not?

A. The water is too clear.

Q. Of course on the Fraser River they drift day and night.

A. Oh, yes; because the water is so muddy there. It does not make any difference where the water is dirty. The Fraser River is a large river and wide in the mouth, you know.

Q. Have you been at Point Roberts?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. This year?

A. No.

Q. What do you think of the use of pound nets for salmon?

Mr. Smith:- They are the very ones that get the fish.

Q. Dont they get too many fish?

Smith:- Well, they get them in this way, they take all that comes along.

Mr. Charles P. Smith is an eastern fisherman, from Lake Michigan (who answered the questions that follow). He left there 4 years ago. He fished in Green Bay, close to Escanaba; has been fishing pound nets 12 years up there.

Q. Are you fishing here too?

A. I am fishing for Hume. We only had

one little lift.

Q. Whereabouts?

A. That is over opposite Lopez Island, on San Juan Island; that is with the purse seine.

Q. Have you tried the purse seine in the Straits here?

A. Well, we tried it once at the light, but we struck bottom there.

Q. We are very much interested to know about the use of purse seines in the Straits. I have heard of your ~~xxx~~ purse seines before. We were talking with Capt. Gaudin of the other side about fishing on the other side of the Straits. He is the agent of the Department of Marine and Fisheries of Canada. I dont know whether you were talking with him or not?

A. No, I dont think I was talking with him. It may have been Mr. Hume. We are trying at Race Rock Island, but we struck bottom there; we got a little too close and the tide was very strong.

Q. That is the only place you have tried in the Straits?

A. That is all. I never have fished with the purse seines, but I know now how it is.

You see when you go over there to fish you can fish -- now, those sockeyes, I can just say that they ought to have a little shallow net -- an 18 fathom net would not do in 8 fathoms of water; and I bet if we had a thousand in that net we had a million, and we had to let them all go.

Q. The best purse seining is in this part of Puget Sound?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Now, around Point Roberts they dont use the purse seines successfully?

A. No, I suppose not.

Q. Have you been at Point Roberts?

A. We were just going up there, but the head of the firm fishing for Hume got a letter saying they got no fish there, and so he thought we would stay down here.

Q. What is your idea on the Great Lakes about the use of so many pound nets?

A. Well, when we first started them, you know, of course they were a new thing and we knew nothing about them; that is about 12 years ago.

Q. Were not there any pound nets where you were fishing before then?

A. No, sir.

Q. What were you using?

A. Gill nets. The Indians could spear whitefish and trout. The pound nets, I had some of the first ones that came out. Of course they were a great thing. You see there are certain fish; certain runs -- now they say the sockeye run into the pound net, but some fish will not run into a pound net. Now, the silver salmon will not run into a pound net, so John says. Now, we fished there and we got whitefish, trout and dorés, and they are all leading fish, and by and by we cleaned them out and we cleaned them out in all 3 lakes; and you may say in 4 years, for in Green Bay there was 75 pound nets -- just think of it! The fish came in shore for their food and when they came in there they are bound to lead up against that, and they cleaned them out -- and then, of course, the hatchery -- but the fishermen wants a law when he sees they are all going, and the State of course, passed a law; they shall have so big mesh, and so it will have to be here soon.

Q. But will the mesh make much difference here? The sockeyes are about the same size?

A. Well, it seems to me there are not many small ones among them, but the reason of it is they come from such a big body of water, but the old man at the light house claims they will be lost. He says he has been here 40 years and has been fishing all the time, and he says they are less every year; and now, if that is so, then they have got to stop those pound nets; but yet it is a great thing to have them; they catch fish -- they caught 12,000 the other day-- in one net 12,000 and the other net 11,000 that is at San Juan Island in the passage going up to Friday Harbor. There are 2 nets at the southern point of San Juan Island. I would like to have one right on Eagle Point and I would scoop him all to pieces. We were laying right in at North Eagle Point, and the boys had a net, and they had it so full; and they were still jumping outside of them, and they caught the bottom of the net and had to let them go.

Q. It seems to me they have got to have regulations if they want to keep the fish going for a number of years; that they have got to have a close time?

A. They have got to have a certain mesh, the same as they had on the lakes. You know, whitefish gills in 4 inch mesh and it is not big enough. You see, here there is 3 kinds of them, and, of course, if this -- when we used to get them, there was 1's, 2's and 3's, and when we could not sell the 3's we would let them go over to the manure pile, and that is just killing them, you know. Those that we called No. 3 would be about 1/4 lb. fish, and we used to sell them in Chicago.

Q. Have you ever been on Lake Erie?

A. Oh, yes.

Q. At Sandusky?

A. No; not just in there. I was in Erie. I saw quite a good deal of fish up there, although Lake Huron was a good fishing place, down in the lower part from Port Huron to Sand Beach. It seems to me there is a difference in the water here -- no rain; it seems the fish want water, and if the rivers dont run anything it seems as though the fish have some obstruction to getting up. The silver sides we generally get about the latter part of August here, and of course it is early yet. I have

been here 3 years.

Q. Where were you fishing last year?

A. We were not fishing anywheres, because I had no rig, and we were just hauling a seine at Moss Creek.

Q. What for?

A. Salmon.

Q. Where would you haul a seine for salmon here, at the mouths of the creeks?

A. Yes; that is one place you can haul it.

Q. You would haul it at the beach here?

A. No; it is seldom you can haul it. You can get just as many down at the little creek here in the town as you would at Moss Creek.

Q. What salmon would you get there mostly?

A. Oh, mixed; silver and humpback. That is the only fish you can get in any quantity.

Q. Could you get the dog salmon in quantity?

A. Well, sometimes you could get them there, although I have not fished much anyway. We have been out 4 days and tried all over, but it is sohard to get in a place where they stay. These sockeyes have all passed over now. The

canneries have got plenty, some of them, but some have not got so much.

Q. Where have they got them?

A. Well, I think up at the Fraser River they have got so much. I think they said they had those traps so full they could not get any more in.

Q. Have you done any salt water fishing here for halibut, or anything of that sort?

A. No, sir. We had 2 fellows here working this last 2 years, and they fished for halibut.

JOHNSON.

Q. How about the fishing for other kinds of fish? Do they catch any halibut around here?

A. Oh, yes, plenty.

Q. Where do they fish for them?

A. Oh, about 4 miles above, at Green Point and they fish right across here, and there is another bank at Point Crescent, Lisle River bank they call it, and then there is another bank at Clallam Bay, Pillar Point.

Q. Do they get many halibut?

A. Yes, sir; sometimes you can get 5,000

or 6,000 lbs.

Q. At one lift?

A. No; not in one set. You can get 2,000 lbs. in a set. The schooners from Seattle do not fish here; they go outside.

Q. What do they use here, small boats?

A. No; sloops, about 4 or 5 tons.

Q. How many men are fishing for halibut?

A. Two, generally; two on a sloop.

Q. How many sloops?

A. Oh, any number of them. I believe there must be over 100 sloops all told here, between Cape Flattery and Townsend.

Q. What do they do, use trot lines?

A. No; set lines.

Q. That is what I meant, set lines.

A. Yes.

Q. What do they use for bait?

A. Herring.

Q. Where do they get them?

A. Oh, at the island, and off here.

They seine them.

Q. What do they do with the halibut they catch?

A. They sell it fresh.

Q. Whereabouts?

A. Here in the fish market they sell some, and in Port Townsend, Seattle, Tacoma, and send some east.

Q. Are the halibut gotten inside here?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. What will they weigh?

A. From 20 to 100 lbs.

Q. Have you ever seen the halibut from Flattery Bank?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Which are the best, those out there or those inside?

A. We claim these halibut are better; they are harder and firmer.

Q. How deep water do you get the most of them in?

A. Oh, 25 or 30 fathoms of water.

Q. Are they just as common as when you first came here?

A. There were more then than now -- they are getting less abundant. They are not as plentiful as they used to be in here, but outside they are.

Q. I dont see why they are not as abundant

A. Oh, they have been picked up; they are not as plentiful as they used to be.

Q. What other fish do you get here in salt water?

A. Dog fish.

Q. What do you do with them?

A. Fish them for the livers, and make oil of them. Then cod.

Q. Where do they catch codfish?

A. All around, everywhere.

Q. You mean the common cod, the same as you get in Norway?

A. No.

Q. How do they differ?

A. These are a different kind of fish.

Q. These common cod are the same as you get in Norway?

A. No, sir.

Q. What is the difference?

A. They have not so big a head. You can put a common fish in his mouth, of these here.

Q. You are not talking about the ling cod?

A. Well, that is what I am talking about.

Q. With one fin along his back?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. And not 3 fins?

A. No.

Q. Have they any teeth?

A. Yes; almost like a bull dog.

Q. What is the color, red blotches on the side?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Did you ever see any Norway cod over here?

A. Well, we get some, but they are very small, about 2 feet long; weigh 3 to 5 lbs. They have a tip on the jaw; those are Norway cod.

Q. What other kinds of fish do you get here?

A. Then, we get this flounder, and rock cod.

Q. Many kinds of rock cod?

A. Oh, we get some bass here.

Q. Get any smelt?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Anchovies?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Are they very common?

A. No; we can get quite plenty of them,

though. They are plenty right now. I guess a man could get a boat load in the bay now.

Q. Do you know they make sardines?

A. Oh, yes; they make fine sardines.

Q. Why dont you put them up?

A. Oh, nobody is working at it. They have not got the material to start it. Then we have what we call Spanish mackerel here.

Q. What are they?

A. I dont know just what they are.

Q. You have none on hand?

A. No.

Q. Do you get any sturgeon here.

A. Yes, lots of them.

Q. Do you do anything with them?

A. No; just kill them for the liver.

Occasionally we get ~~some~~ once in a while one in the fish line, but we never fish for them.

Q. You dont get many black cod here?

A. No, black cod is not very much.

Q. Are the herring good to eat?

A. Yes.

Q. Good as Noway herring?

A. No.

Q. What are they, too small?

A. Too poor. The size is all right.

Q. How long do they grow?

A. Oh, you can get herring here 6 or 8 inches long.

Q. How long do you get them in Norway?

A. Oh, we can get them there 12 inches long. Great big fat ones, almost like pork.

Q. People dont eat them here?

A. Oh, yes, they do eat a lot of them. But you see the herring you get here are spawned herring. You dont get them when they have the fat in their belly.

Q. What time of year do you get them?

A. Now.

Q. Are they spawning now?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you have capelan in Norway?

A. No.

Q. Do you get any crabs here?

A. Yes, big ones; right here. They are quite common.

Q. How many kinds?

A. Oh, 2 or 3 kinds; I dont know exactly what they call them.

Q. Could I see them?

A. You could, providing it was not blowing hard. You can see them from the wharves.

Q. Do you get any prawns or shrimps here?

A. No. We only get bullheads here.

Q. But the shrimps?

A. No, I never saw any.

Q. Clams?

A. Yes; they are common.

Q. How many kinds have you here?

A. Two kinds that I know of.

Q. Do you sell them at the market at all?

A. Yes, but not now.

Q. When do you use them?

A. Oh, about 2 months from now.

Q. You begin 2 months from now, and how long do they last?

A. Well; at least we don't want them here but for 3 months in the market.

Q. What months?

A. June, July and August.

Q. Get any oysters here?

A. Get no oysters at all.

Smith:- It takes 2 1/2 years for the whitefish to get 2 lbs. in weight; that is on the Great Lakes.